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WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

On October 27, five to six thousand people rallied in Seattle to oppose US wars, current and pending. Unfortunately, not everyone could fit in the frame. Photo by Colleen Roman.

Misreporting the war and not reporting the anti-war

BRITNEY SPEARS NOT SIGHTED AT SEATTLE ANTI-WAR RALLY

by Mark Jensen,
United for Peace of Pierce County
(UFPPC)

OCTOBER 28, 2007—A review of the mainstream media organs of the Pacific Northwest shows that they downplayed and misrepresented a strong and significant outpouring of antiwar protest in covering the End the War Now march and rally in Seattle on Saturday, October 27.

KING 5's Jesse Jones deserves a giant UFPPC Raspberry Award for Worst Reporting for making three glaring errors in his 25-word lead: "Close to 2,000 people marched through Seattle protesting the war in Iraq Saturday, on the fifth anniversary of the Senate vote that approved the war."

First of all, the number of protesters participating Saturday was not 2,000 but more on the order of 5,000 to 6,000—we know, because we were there and we counted them ourselves. (There were five busloads from Portland alone, as well as contingents from every sizeable community in the Pacific Northwest—facts that also went unreported.)

Second, the 77–23 Senate vote referred to by KING 5's Jones took place on October 11, 2002, not October 27, 2002.

Third, the congressional vote in question did not "approve the war." Reread it yourself if you have any doubts on that score. No, Congress did not "approve the war," it authorized the use of US military forces against Iraq if certain conditions were met. (For an argument that the record now demonstrates that the conditions set forth by Congress were not met, and that it is now a matter of historical fact that the president lied his way into war, visit the UFPPC website at *www.ufppc.org/content/view/2645/29* .)

The absence of any mention whatsoever of the predominant impeachment theme at Saturday's protest, despite the fact that polls show about half of all Americans are in favor of impeachment, is remarkable and significant.

No wonder a large sign seen on Saturday read "DEMOCRACY/HYPOCRISY."

Moving on to other reports: the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* avoided disputes about how many marchers there were by putting the number, unhelpfully, at "thousands."

Tom Paulson of the *Post-Intelligencer* observed: "Though many of the speaker comments, and placards, at the protest were unsurprisingly hostile to the Bush Administration, a significant number also fired salvoes in the direction of the Democrats for so far failing to take any meaningful steps toward ending the war."

Paulson deserves a UFPPC Politics of Fear Award for adding, despite the fact that there was not a single arrest—not even, as far as we know, a single untoward incident during the protest—that "Seattle police on bicycles closely monitored black-clad anarchists, many with handkerchiefs covering their faces," and that a "young Republican" complained of marchers: "These people are guilty of sedition. It's a disgrace."

It's the printing of this remark in this context and as the concluding sentence that's a disgrace, in our opinion.

There was an anxious edge to many of the banners and handouts on Saturday. The possibility of an attack on Iran, of a nuclear explosion in an American city, and of the declaration of martial law in the US were reiterated themes, and one middle-class couple was seen carrying a large banner emblazoned with the words "RECOGNIZE FASCISM."

But reporter Dominic Gates of the *Seattle Times* didn't see it, apparently. He deserves a UFPPC Positive Thinking Award for an upbeat piece for calling the mood of Saturday's march "buoyant in the sunshine as young and old mixed easily."[4] (We admit his case was helped by his giving a certain member of UFPPC the last word in his article.)

The *Olympian* deserves a UFPPC Local Beat Award for its brief article calling attention "[a]bout 200 people [who] rode in a caravan to Seattle on Saturday to join thousands of others demonstrating in a National Day of Action against the war in Iraq."

Alone among the region's major dailies, the *Tacoma News Tribune* failed to print or post any story on Saturday's End the War Now rally and march, contenting itself with a short Associated Press article on nationwide protests that included two sentences on the Seattle protest.

For this journalistic feat Tacoma's hometown paper is once again richly deserving of a UFPPC Blind Eye Award.

Works in Progress
PO Box 295
Olympia WA 98507

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

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WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

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Send submissions to *submissions@olywip.org* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

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Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

EGYHOP needs donations!

Unofficially, this year's blanket drive has begun. The project formerly known as **EGYHOP**, now known as **Done & Done**, is low on supplies. Done and Done is a 501(c)(3) non profit that does street outreach seven nights a week, 365 days a year. We are entirely volunteer-operated, and depend heavily on support from this town. Many people depend on our continued existence, and we are the only resource available in town after all the other agencies and organizations have closed their doors.

We are in extreme need of: blankets, sleeping bags, tarps, tents, candles and flashlights, socks, warm winter clothing and monetary donations!

We are always in need of: hygiene supplies, medical supplies, shoes, umbrellas, boots, rain ponchos, any kind of camping gear, and batteries.

If you would like to donate any items, please bring them by the **Bread and Roses Staff House** at 1320 8th Ave SE. You can also drop off donations in our marked bins on the mezzanine level of the Capitol Theater or outside the door of our Bike & Bike community bike shop (in the back of Dumpster Values at 4th and Franklin; enter through the side door on Franklin St. and look left). For more information, or for questions regarding how to get involved, please call (360) 570-0608 and leave us a message.

Olympia Freeschool volunteer meeting

Thursday, November 1, 5 PM–7 PM
Olympia Freeschool, 610 Columbia St, Olympia

Join us at the Olympia Free School volunteer meeting and learn more about what you can do to help out! Free, delicious snacks will be provided! If you can't make it to the meeting but would like to learn more about volunteering, contact us by phone at (360) 352-4165 or *info@olympiafreeschool.org* so we can decide on a better time for you! All new! **Many volunteer positions with stipends and commission available!** The Freeschool just published our directory of classes with over 40 free classes and events and it is printable from our website!

Visit our website *www.olympiafreeschool.org*.

"My Name is Rachel Corrie"

Nov. 1–17, 8 PM, at The Paradise Theatre School, 161 Center Road, Chimacum, WA
Thursdays half price $5, Fridays & Saturdays $10.
Reservations: (360) 643-3493, *theparadise@earthlink.net*

Starring Torrey Berkson, directed by Pattie Miles Van Beuzekom, with an introduction by Gabe Van Lelyveld who was a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine just months before Rachel Corrie arrived.

Rachel Corrie was a student at The Evergreen State College who traveled to Palestine and put herself in the middle of the most incendiary conflict of our time. The play is Rachel's chronicle of her brief but extraordinary life.

For more info, contact Pattie Miles Van Beuzekom at *theparadise@earthlink.net*, or visit *home.earthlink.net/~theparadise* .

Support rally for Planned Parenthood

Friday, Nov. 2, 10:30 AM–2 PM, outside Planned Parenthood, at the intersection of Adams & Legion Way

It's time for Olympia to take a stand! **Hands off Planned Parenthood!** Come show community support for the Olympia Planned Parenthood. Signs should support Planned Parenthood's leading role in providing contraception and sex education and that this role will not be compromised. Signs will also be provided. Let's show the bloody folks with the bloody fetus photos that their inflammatory tactics of intimidation do not work.

More info: *venusbot22@yahoo.com*, (360) 357-7509

FILM SHOWING: *War Made Easy*

Friday, November 2, 7 PM
Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation
2200 East End Street NW, Olympia.

Hosted by the **Alliance for Democracy** and the **Olympia Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee**. Catch this movie series every first Friday of the month. Visit *www.sounddemocracy.org*.

War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death reaches into the Orwellian memory hole to expose a 50-year pattern of government deception and media spin that has dragged the US into one war after another from Vietnam to Iraq. Narrated by actor and activist Sean Penn, the film exhumes remarkable archival footage of official distortion and exaggeration from LBJ to George W. Bush, revealing in stunning detail how the American news media have uncritically disseminated the pro-war messages of successive presidential administrations. *www.warmadeeasythemovie.org*

24TH Annual Olympia Film Festival

November 2–10, 2007
Capitol Theater, 206 East 5th Ave, Olympia

The Olympia Film Society (OFS) will present 35 feature films, dozens of shorts, live performances, more than 18 visiting artists, and free community workshops. Events (unless otherwise noted) are at the historic Capitol Theater in downtown Olympia.

The **Opening Night Gala** kicks off the festival on Friday, Nov. 2 at 6:30 PM. The theater is transformed into a Bollywood-esque extravaganza, igniting a block party with fire dancers, DJ and more. The film, *Outsourced*, a delightful Seattle-produced romantic comedy begins at 7:30 PM. Immediately after the film, there will be a champagne reception with food and live music.

This year's blood-curdling **All Freakin' Night** features 5 horror films and other ghastly activities that begin at midnight on Saturday, Nov. 10. (Doors open at 11pm.) The terror will not end until the sun rises Sunday morning. *www.olympiafilmfestival.org*, (360) 754-6670.

Climate Action Day: Step It Up 2

Saturday, November 3, 2007, 1–5 PM
First Christian Church, 7th & Franklin, Olympia

To call for leadership on global warming, a coalition of local groups will host a second Climate Action Day event. The event will build on Step It Up's April 14 rally that produced more than 1,400 events in 50 states, the largest global warming event in US history.

Participants in the rally will call for real leadership on global warming including **Four Key Priorities**: (1) Cut CO_2 by 80% by 2050; (2) cut greenhouse gas by 10% in 3 years; (3) no new coal-fired power plants; and (4) establish a Green Job Corps. Speakers include: Mayor Mark Foutch, City of Olympia, Sister Mimi Maloney, Lara Whitely Binder, Karin Kraft, Jacqui Brown Miller, Holly Gwinn Graham, Hedia Adelsman, Terry Williams, and an honoring of Billy Frank, Jr.

For more info, contact Jack Zeiger at (360) 943-5112 or *Jackzeiger@comcast.net*. Also, visit *www.stepitup2007.org* .

Dahr Jamail & Suheir Hammad: "Beyond Occupation"

Sunday, November 4, at 5 PM
Capitol Theater, 206 E. 5th Ave, Olympia

Dahr Jamail will be speaking from his new book, ***Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq***. He is described by Howard Zinn as "a superb journalist," whose reporting "takes us past the lies of our political leaders, past the cowardice of the mainstream press, into the streets, the homes, the lives of Iraqis living under US occupation."

Suheir Hammad is a Palestinian spoken word Hip-Hop artist, best known for her award-winning performance in Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Jam on Broadway (2003). She has published three collections: ***Born Palestinian, Born Black***; ***Drops of This Story***; and ***Zaatar Diva***. Her passionate performance captures cultural resistance to war, occupation, prisons, racism, dispossession, and gender inequality, while demonstrating the amazing ability to survive, to love, and to maintain hope through times of struggle.

This event is a benefit for **The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace & Justice** and the kick-off for the "Advocating Activism" documentary series in the **Olympia Film Festival**. For more info on the work of The Rachel Corrie Foundation, visit *www.rachelcorriefoundation.org* .

Read an interview with Dahr Jamail on page 8.

POWER events for November

Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights

Volunteer meetings every Wednesday afternoon at 1:30 in the POWER office, 701 Franklin St SE, Olympia (in the Payne Room of the First Christian Church)

Call to Artists! We are seeking donations of arts and crafts for ArtPOWER, our annual celebration and sale of art and crafts, December 8 and 9.

Artists may keep up to 50% of the proceeds. Contact POWER at: (360) 352-9716, or toll free at (866) 343-9716, *welfarerights@riseup.net* .

Moms' Night Out: Voter discussion, Monday, November 5, 5:30 at the First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE. Join us for a potluck at 5:30, activity from 6–8. Bring the kids, we have on-site child care! Join us on Election Day Eve to share what you know about the candidates and the issues and hear what others know.

▸ A lot more **ANNOUNCEMENTS** on page 6!

Olympia Film Society votes in favor of democracy, nothing changes

by Brian Nicholson

On Saturday, October 13, an emergency meeting was held by the Olympia Film Society membership. This was to be the culminating action by the volunteer-organized movement that formed following the firing of Operations Manager Jeffrey Bartone. The movement's aim was to reclaim the Film Society from a leadership perceived as being out of touch with its membership and trying to suit commercial interests. [Editor's Note: See stories in the September 2007 and October 2007 issues of *Works In Progress* for more background on the issues leading up to the meeting.] The emergency meeting was called to vote on whether to amend the OFS bylaws to have a member-elected Board of Directors. A 64% majority voted in favor of a member-elected board. However, a two-thirds majority of 66% was needed to change the bylaws. The Olympia Film Society Board of Directors remains as is: An autocracy that votes among itself on who to let join.

Due to the support for such an amendment, it remains an issue for the Olympia Film Society to address. There will be a discussion, along with a re-vote, at the Olympia Film Society membership's annual meeting, to be held in the Spring of 2008. Many people expect that the energy created by the volunteer movement, most easily associated with www.ofsvolunteers.org, will have died down at this point, but perhaps some of the reactionary resentment that seemingly fueled the minority will have died down as well.

The second measure to be voted on at the meeting—to dissolve the board immediately and to elect a new one—was voted down more resolutely, with only 36% of the voting OFS membership in favor of such a proposal.

The vote was disheartening to many volunteers, several of whom have quit their volunteer shifts in tired disgust. Some aim to achieve change in the Film Society by being involved in other ways, such as attending the Board meetings and the programming meetings, both of which are open to the public. This is separate from the strike that was reported on in the September 2007 issue of *Works In Progress* that was the first fruit of the volunteer movement

The Olympia Film Society continues to function, for the time being, without an Operations Manager, with unpaid volunteers picking up the slack left behind, and a largely disenfranchised membership.

This is not to say that Olympia should not support the Film Society economically. The stated goals of the Film Society are fine ones, and the continued existence of a historic site such as the Capitol Theater is a fine bulwark against the gentrification of downtown. No one involved in the volunteer movement, least of all the ousted Jeffrey Bartone, wants harm to befall the Olympia Film Society. People are urged to try to affect change within the leadership, so that the Film Society does not continue to harm itself by trying to compete with the commercial aims of the multiplexes instead of fostering an independent and self-sustaining community of people interested in film as an art medium.

Brian Nicholson is a volunteer projectionist and amateur videomaker at the Olympia Film Society.

State to Blackwater: Nothing you say can and will be used against you in a court of law

by Jeremy Scahill

Apparently there is one set of rights for Blackwater mercenaries and another for the rest of us. Normally when a group of people alleged to have gunned down 17 civilians in a lawless shooting spree are questioned, investigators will tell them something along the lines of: "You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law." But that is not what the Blackwater operatives involved in the September 16 Nisour Square shooting in Iraq were told. Most of the Blackwater shooters were questioned by State Department Diplomatic Security investigators with the understanding that their statements and information gleaned from them could not be used to bring criminal charges against them, nor could they be introduced as evidence. In other words, "Anything you say can't and won't be used against you in a court of law."

ABC News obtained copies of sworn statements given by Blackwater guards in the immediate aftermath of the shootings, all of which begin, "I understand this statement is being given in furtherance of an official administrative inquiry," and that, "I further understand that neither my statements nor any information or evidence gained by reason of my statements can be used against me in a criminal proceeding." Constitutional law expert Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, says the offering of so-called "use immunity" agreements by the State Department is "very irregular," adding he could not recall a precedent for it. In normal circumstances, Ratner said, such immunity is only granted after a Grand Jury or Congressional committee has been convened and the party has invoked their 5th Amendment rights against self-incrimination. It would then be authorized by either a judge or the committee.

Military law expert Scott Horton of Human Rights First says, "What the State Department has done in this case is inconsistent with proper law enforcement standards. It is likely to undermine an ultimate prosecution, if not make it impossible. In this sense, the objective of the State Department in doing this is exposed to question. It seems less to be to collect the facts than to immunize Blackwater and its employees. By purporting to grant immunity, the State Department draws itself more deeply into the wrongdoing and adopts a posture vis-a-vis Blackwater that appears downright conspiratorial. This will make the fruits of its investigation a tough sell."

Ratner says that while what was offered the Blackwater operatives is not immunity from prosecution, prosecutors would need to prove they did not use the sworn statements as part of their investigation. "Even though the person can be prosecuted if independent evidence is relied upon, often this is hard to demonstrate," he says. As an example of the problems such immunity can pose, Ratner points to the case of Oliver North. "He had been granted 'use immunity' and was then prosecuted, supposedly on the basis of independent evidence," Ratner says. "However, his conviction was reversed in the court of appeals because it could not be demonstrated that all of the evidence against him had an independent source outside of his own testimony."

> Private contractors now outnumber regular soldiers on the Iraq battlefield. The military—with its massive bureaucracy—has been unable or unwilling to effectively monitor the actions of its soldiers and prosecute them for crimes. Who will effectively oversee the 180,000-strong shadow corporate army?

Aside from the fundamental problem that there is quite possibly no legal framework for charging the Blackwater shooters under any legal system—US civilian law, military law or Iraqi law—legal analysts and a former federal prosecutor say the State Department has already tainted the Nisour Square criminal investigation in several ways. The FBI was not dispatched to investigate the case until two weeks after the shootings occurred, meaning that the initial investigation was in the hands of a non-law enforcement agency that just happens to be Blackwater's employer. By the time actual law enforcement, the FBI, was sent to Baghdad, the crime scene had been tainted and some of the perpetrators questioned with the alleged immunity provision. "To rely on non-law enforcement to conduct sensitive law enforcement activities makes no sense if you want impartial justice," says Melanie Sloan, a former federal prosecutor who currently serves as Executive Director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "This investigation has already taken so long and it looks like the State Department has impeded the possibility of a successful criminal investigation." The Washington Post reported that "Some of the Blackwater guards have subsequently refused to be interviewed by the FBI, citing promises of immunity from State."

This is hardly the first indication that the government's investigation of the Nisour Square shootings was lacking in integrity and impartiality. The State Department's initial report on the shooting was drafted by a Blackwater contractor on official US government stationary. The FBI team initially dispatched to Baghdad to investigate Blackwater was to be guarded by Blackwater until Sen. Patrick Leahy raised questions about the arrangement forcing the Bureau to announce it would be guarded by official personnel and not personnel from the same company it was investigating.

Perhaps the most disturbing part of this story (aside from the loss of Iraqi civilian life) is that even if Blackwater was not so politically connected to the White House and even if there was a truly independent US Justice Department and even if immunity had not been offered and even if there was an aggressive investigation, it may all be totally irrelevant. When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recently dispatched a team to Baghdad led by veteran diplomat Patrick Kennedy to review the department's private security force, the team returned with the conclusion that it "is unaware of any basis for holding non-Department of Defense contractors accountable under US law."

While there are currently moves afoot in the US Congress to adjust language in the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act to allow for prosecutions of State Department contractor crimes in US civilian courts and although there is a debate over whether the court martial system could be applied, the reality is that the political will to prosecute contractors has been totally absent since day one of the Iraq occupation. Not a single armed contractor has ever been prosecuted for crimes committed in Iraq—not under US civilian law, not under military law and certainly not in Iraqi courts, which have been banned by the US occupation authorities from going after private contractors.

What is so often lost in this new debate on accountability and oversight is this fact: private contractors now outnumber regular soldiers on the Iraq battlefield. The military—with its massive bureaucracy—has been unable or unwilling to effectively monitor the actions of its soldiers and prosecute them for crimes. Who will effectively oversee the 180,000-strong shadow corporate army? Will FBI teams really be running around Iraq chasing allegations (ever increasing) of contractor crimes and misconduct? Who will guard the investigators? Who will interview Iraqi witnesses? Where will the funding come from? Who will arrest the heavily-armed mercenary alleged to have committed a crime, particularly when he was doing exactly what he was supposed to do in keeping VIP US officials alive in Iraq?

While there may be some token prosecutions that stem from the recent uptick in reporting on contractor crimes in Iraq, the reality is that without private forces from Blackwater and its ilk, the US occupation of Iraq would be untenable. Nothing will be done that would actually jeopardize the use of such forces in the war zone. While Blackwater's conduct in Iraq is horrifying, it is important to remember that US ambassadors—all four who have served under the Iraq occupation—owe their lives to Blackwater's shoot-first-and-never-ask-questions cowboy tactics. They are the reason the company can brag it has never lost an American life it was protecting. Blackwater does its job and while it is essential to prosecute its operatives for their crimes, the ultimately responsible party is the entity that hired them and deployed them armed and dangerous in Iraq.

Jeremy Scahill is the author of the New York Times bestseller Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army. *He is currently a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at the Nation Institute.*

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State settles over arrest of activist

Justice finally served...sort of...and late, as always

by the WIP News Service

On October 12, 2007 the Evergreen Law Group announced a settlement with the State of Washington over the arrest of an activist who was handcuffed, detained and cited while handing out leaflets against the Patriot Act in 2004.

The Evergreen Law Group represented Pat Tassoni, a civic activist, Tenants Union employee, co-president of Olympia's Downtown Neighborhood Association, and occasional local CopWatch volunteer that monitors police, educates the public about police misconduct, and advocates for more accountable law enforcement practices.

The initial arrest occurred in the late morning of June 3, 2004, when Tassoni was walking to work past Sylvester Park in downtown Olympia, after having just left a "No Patriot Act" demonstration up the street. He was leafleting parked cars on his way and was noticed by General Administration employee Larry Kessel, who more recently was named the Olympia Downtown [business] Association's 2006 "Person of the Year" for his heavy-handed role in targeted downtown park management. Tassoni was soon approached by Washington State Patrol Trooper Reginald Woods who demanded his identification, handcuffed and searched him, and cited him for failing to produce a license while operating a motor vehicle, even though Tassoni was a pedestrian and was not involved with any motor vehicle. Two additional troopers, Matheson and Baker, also responded to the scene. The charge filed against Tassoni was eventually dismissed.

"The charge against Mr. Tassoni was preposterous," said Legrand Jones, the attorney who represented Tassoni in both the criminal and civil proceedings. The Evergreen Law Group is a member of the National Lawyers Guild and had also represented local activist "Long Hair" David Fawver when Fawver was wrongfully charged with assault in Sylvester Park by members of the Washington State Patrol in February 2004.

> Trooper Woods' decision to summarily punish Tassoni by handcuffing, searching and citing him solely at the request of a fellow state employee demonstrates a disregard for Tassoni's constitutional rights

The current settlement agreement, in which the State of Washington denies any wrongdoing, is for an undisclosed amount. Tassoni hopes with this settlement that officers and troopers of all agencies recognize and respect the First Amendment rights of all people and that further training be provided to help officers understand the difference between commercial and free speech, public and private property, as well as between pedestrians and motorists.

Trooper Woods' decision to summarily punish Tassoni by handcuffing, searching and citing him solely at the request of a fellow state employee demonstrates a disregard for Tassoni's constitutional rights and has a chilling effect on all visitors and residents. Tassoni also believes that through use of his case, the public will understand how the police engage in political and social harassment of law-abiding people.

However, there remain outstanding issues with regards to Trooper Woods on other matters and the policies of the State related to park management. Last year, Woods arbitrarily cited local resident Ben Livingston for walking on Powerhouse Road, a popular pathway for joggers and pedestrians near Heritage Park. Woods also temporarily banned Livingston from Heritage Park although Livingston was not cited for any infractions in the park. Livingston is still pursuing justice in the issue. (For more information, visit *http://inwa.net/~ben/trespass*). Tassoni is hopeful that the public attention to his own issue by this settlement will send a clear signal that it is not only unconstitutional, but counterproductive, for law enforcement to target people for their legal actions simply because they don't like them.

State Troopers Woods (with bicycle helmet) and Baker (with cowboy hat) after citing Pat Tassoni. This photo was taken by Tassoni just after his release on June 3, 2004.

Interview with Pat Tassoni

So what makes him so special that he can walk around downtown without a license, anyway?

by Janet Blanding

Janet Blanding interviews Pat Tassoni, local activist and cofounder of Olympia CopWatch, and the plaintiff in the wrongful arrest suit, as detailed in the article above.

I understand that you were involved with the creation of Olympia CopWatch. When did you start CopWatch, and why?

I think it was the fifth anniversary of the beating of Rodney King when we announced the formation of Copwatch in Olympia.

So that would have been 1996?

Yes.

Who was "we"?

A number of people, mostly activists associated with the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace at that time and the Liberation Café, including Frank Hoffman, Tom Nogler, and Dave Griffiths, and some others.

My personal story is when I first moved to the "dangerous" downtown Olympia area, it was before the creation of the ODA business association, and it was during the development of the downtown walking patrol. I worked in a place that was open the latest downtown (other than a bar). I would get stopped and harassed by the police, the same officers, OPD, every couple of weeks.

Were these the same cops who illegally detained you in Sylvester Park?

No, those were troopers in the Washington State Patrol. But some of the same officers of the OPD were present during the demonstration up the street, and they didn't arrest me or anybody.

Because you whipped them into shape with Oly CopWatch?

[*Pat coughs modestly and evades the question.*] The officers when I was first downtown would stop me every two weeks as if they'd never met me before, including the absurdity that I used to work for a time in the same building as them.

Where was that?

They had a substation in the Mottman building.

So, I started to get to know their names, although they never seemed to know mine, or where I worked, or what I was doing and where I lived. I was just a smartass from Lacey who didn't know my rights, but through the constant harassment, I came to understand what my rights were. And so if the City of Olympia and the OPD wonders how this all happened, they only have themselves to blame.

Over the years CopWatch has interjected accountability models into the city plans for their police department. And there's been some bureaucratic progress made in that area, but nothing that approaches true accountability. The cops are a bit more used to having their police actions observed. It used to be totally predictable that they would threaten to arrest people who were watching and I'm sure they still do, but at least they acknowledge that citizens have the right to watch them as they do their business—but they still harass people for sure.

Do you think the OPD is more careful to avoid violating the rights of citizens since CopWatch started?

I would say they are more careful not to *openly* violate citizens' rights, which means that they know they are being watched as they do their duty. Or they suspect they're being watched—by citizens, not by other cops or any officials.

How do different law enforcement entities compare? For instance, during the protests at the Port of Olympia, some people felt that the Thurston County Sheriff's Department and State Patrol were significantly more brutal than the OPD.

CopWatch has sort of provided the OPD with on-the-street training that certainly the sheriffs don't get. The State Patrol gets a little, but obviously not enough to understand civil liberties, as in my case.

Were they targeting and harassing you personally because of your role in creating Oly CopWatch?

Larry Kessel definitely knew who I was, or should have. But I think the trooper who detained me, Woods, was just a moron, and still is a moron.

It was a demonstration, so cops of all jurisdictions were there, and they were out to protect the Republican party that was present and "serve" the public who was protesting them—and by serve, I mean harass and target.

[*Editor's note: the demonstration was against a Bush–Cheney campaign event that was promoting the Patriot Act and featured former New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, who would months later be nominated by Bush to be the Secretary of Homeland Security. Kerik quickly withdrew the nomination amid a series of personal scandals.*]

So I think just because I was involved in protesting and such, I was targeted, but it's not because Woods knew who I was. I was just a part of the protesting class exercising my rights, which annoys the police in general.

Why did you choose to sue the State Patrol?

In my experience of watching the police, and working with the City Council to try to get them to actually develop an accountable police department, the only real way to change police behavior, I believe, is a cost benefit analysis, which means suing the fuckers whenever you can.

So, as a citizen, I thank you, Pat. What are you going to spend the money on?

After reimbursing myself for the actual costs, there's not a lot left over. These suits are not necessarily for monetary gain, as they are another way to change the system.

Lawsuits are a long tedious process, mine took three years, but it is a way to make them examine their policies and provide further training to avoid knowingly repeating incidences.

Considering that you settled your suit, are you optimistic about the future? Will it be easier for citizens to assert their civil rights vis-à-vis the police?

Things have changed over the last ten years and it's not as difficult to find a lawyer to sue the police as it used to be. I was hoping for enough of a settlement to set-up a revolving defense fund to retain attorneys to always be suing the police, but that didn't happen.

Why is it easier to find a lawyer to sue the cops now than it was ten years ago?

I don't know actually, I just have noticed it's changed. Ten years ago if you wanted to sue the cops, no one would take the case. Now, it's not too hard to find a lawyer. Maybe Olympia is growing up after all.

Anybody who has a good case—and not every case is good, because the cops know how to lie or it's not politically expedient to sue—I'm at the point where it only makes sense to sue, rather than asking the police to be nice, or relying on the city council to actually give a shit. Although [Olympia City Councilmembers] TJ [Johnson] and Laura [Ware] have stuck their necks out... but they're leaving.

How do you think the new city council will do with developing plans for a more accountability from law enforcement?

I guess we'll see next year.

Here is a picture of Pat Tassoni operating a motor vehicle. Photo by Janet Blanding.

Nothing defeats Wa He Lut

by Daisy Ouye

Maiselle Bridges, Puyallup Tribal Elder, is a local living legend and visionary behind Wa He Lut Indian School. She and her daughters, Alison Gottfriedson and Suzette Bridges, are lifetime members of the school board at Wa He Lut, a state-aligned and accredited school. 120 students, K–8, from many native tribes, travel from as far as Skokomish, Squaxin, and McCleary for a quality education that includes their native history and culture.

The school is located at historic Frank's Landing on the Nisqually River near the Frank's Landing smoke shop. Raided by federal agents in May, the smoke shop has been closed for 5 months, freezing funds used to provide supplies and equipment to Wa He Lut. The fate of a state cigarette compact is still in the hands of the politicians. But in the words of William Frank Sr., Maiselle's dad, "Nothing defeated Wa He Lut the man, and so nothing will defeat our school."

Maiselle and Al Bridges, as well as daughters Alison, Valerie and Suzette, were key figures in the struggle of local Native people to retain fishing rights guaranteed in the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854. There were decades of violent raids on the people of Frank's Landing, land held in federal trust for William Frank Sr. since 1919. Two years earlier many Native people were evacuated from their homes for the construction of Fort Lewis. Some allotments for Native people were obtained in the land grab, including Frank's Landing. State game wardens clubbed and jailed Native people for fishing the river; Maiselle and her family were no exception.

Finally, in 1974, the Boldt Decision stated that the rights of the tribes had been violated and that treaty was to be recognized, but the raids continued.

This struggle for treaty rights is the focus of Carol Burns' documentary, *As Long as the Rivers Run*. She lived with Maiselle's family for 3 years. Maiselle's daughters, just teenagers then, spoke with the passion and strength of clear leaders in Carol's documentary, rallying activists who'd come to offer help. The film is dedicated to the Bridges' middle child, Valerie, who, though an avid swimmer, drowned in the Nisqually in 1970.

> Winning an award for quality construction done expeditiously, the new school opened in 1998 and is a testament to a proud culture.

Valerie always wanted to help her urban cousins learn about their culture. Berry picking, carving, weaving, and beading were all skills Valerie was interested in teaching and those same things are taught at Wa He Lut. The school also teaches Native language, sign language, and traditional ceremonies. "In memory of her, we started the school". Maiselle explained. It was named after Wa He Lut , Nisqually warrior and "right hand to Chief Leschi." Suzette's son Powhatten was reaching school age, so despite ongoing raids, her husband Sid Miller built a two-room school directly on the landing.

"Totem poles outside Wa He Lut school. The traditional cedar totem pole on the right tells the story of the women of the fishing struggle. Photo by Daisy Ouye.

Maiselle Bridges and her daughter Alison Gottfriedson. Photo by Daisy Ouye.

When game wardens came in to raid, teachers would get the children on the floor to play games so they wouldn't see their parents mistreated and arrested. But it kept up, so the small school was lifted in the night and moved just across the road, which was Fort Lewis land by then. However, in Maiselle's words, "warriors in D.C." successfully worked to regain that property for the school. The National Guard was eventually called in to end the continuing raids. Built up over time, the school gained funding but was lost to a flood in 1996.

> Schools like Wa He Lut are vital to keeping children connected to their ancestral culture amidst the modern day popular culture.

Winning an award for quality construction done expeditiously, the new school opened in 1998 and is a testament to a proud culture. "What we try to do is give them a good, strong sense of who they are, to be proud of it," said principal Brenda Bowman, as we peeked into the lively classrooms, everyone engaged in activity. The whole staff created a positive atmosphere, crediting and helping each other and it is reflected in the students. Native art and cultural artifacts are displayed in the entry: figures of welcome carved by master carver Simon Charlie, as well as a dugout canoe once confiscated by state game wardens.

Schools like Wa He Lut are vital to keeping children connected to their ancestral culture amidst the modern day popular culture. Suzette Mills once told me that anything you believe in your heart and commit to can make a difference, and I believe that too. Alison, whose Indian name means "someone who gets things done," confidently believes these students will succeed and emerge as leaders. Wa He Lut begins each day with ancestral songs, drumming, and dances while standing in a large circle—with no beginning, and no end.

Daisy Ouye is an independent journalist. Born in Michigan, she has been an Olympia resident for 16 years.

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HOW THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HELPED GET CAFTA PASSED IN COSTA RICA

by Marco Rosaire Rossi

Spirits were high at the "NO!" Campaign's demonstration in San José, Costa Rica, one week before the Oct. 7 vote on whether to approve the controversial trade agreement CAFTA. There was no reason for them not to be: over 100,000 people had attended the demonstration, several polls had consistently shown that the "NO!" Campaign was going to squeak by (with one poll showing that they were ahead by 12%), and the government of President Óscar Arias had just humiliated itself in a recent leaked memorandum scandal. The contents of the memo indicated that the government was going to lose the "Sí" vote. It read: "The coalition against us is formidable: universities, the church, unions, environmental groups, etc. On the other side, in favor of CAFTA, there is only the government and—half-heartedly—the main businessmen." To a lot of people, it seemed like a vote "No" would likely succeed.

But come referendum day, the results were different. Instead of the "No" pulling ahead of the "Sí," the "Sí" pulled ahead of the "No"—with a 51.5 to 48.5 split. On October 22, the results were finalized, and CAFTA can now begin the process of becoming part of Costa Rican law.

The tables were turned on the "NO!" Campaign through a set of lies and misleading statements, led by the Bush administration, intended to convince those undecided on CAFTA that if they didn't vote "No," Costa Rica would lose previous trade deals and people would lose their jobs.

Before the referendum, the national media continually broadcasted statements by US Trade Representative Susan Schwab, in which she denied the possibility of renegotiating CAFTA if Costa Rica voted "No," and implied the United States would cancel Costa Rica access to US markets through the Caribbean Basin Initiative. She wasn't alone. Mark Langdale, the US Ambassador to Costa Rica, made similar comments. He also made an appearance at the Sardinmar Cannery—a company that threatened to move out of the country if CAFTA wasn't signed—to promote CAFTA and free trade. The remarks were hogwash. Only a small portion of Costa Rica's trade preferences would be up for consideration next year in Congress, and it is unlikely that the Democratic majority—a majority that had voted against CAFTA when it was before Congress—would refuse to renew the agreement based on a "No" vote.

But more than being hogwash, the comments were illegal. Congresswoman Linda Sanchez reminded Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—the Ambassador's and the Trade Representative's boss—that such statements amounted to interfering in Costa Rica's domestic political system and violated US, Costa Rican, and international laws. In an attempt to clear the matter up further, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid wrote a formal letter clearly stating that CAFTA would not affect Costa Rica's status under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Mike Michaud travelled to Costa Rica personally to tell the people that no punitive actions would be taken based of the direction of the vote.

Despite these efforts though, the damage was already done. In the final week before the vote, the "SÍ!" Campaign seized upon the fibs and used them to create a scenario of complete economic collapse in the country unless CAFTA was signed. In that last week, the lie of economic collapse became gospel. This included the massive use of "robo-calls" sent via cell phone and text message. People would pick up their phones and find a pre-recorded message that said: "I thought the FTA (free trade) didn't affect me. But Ana is going to lose her job. Let's help her. Vote yes." Flower exporting firms told workers to not bother showing up for work on Monday if the vote was "No." The implication was that a "No" vote would mean business would have to shutdown and move someplace else.

> Congresswoman Sanchez reminded Condoleezza Rice that such statements amounted to interfering in Costa Rica's domestic political system and violated US, Costa Rican, and international laws.

The irony of all this rhetoric is that if economic collapse is to happen in Costa Rica, it is more likely to occur with CAFTA than without it. Under CAFTA, the country will be forced to open public businesses—like telecommunications and health care—to private investment. Agriculture and service sectors will be forced to compete with foreign companies that pay workers a lot less, and the lack of tariffs will discourage economic growth. Not to mention the problems with the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer, and corporations having greater influence over the Costa Rican political system. All this could lead to a recipe for economic disaster.

Even though the vote is over, the opposition has vowed not to back down. They will continue to fight CAFTA's implementation, and with good reason. Costa Rica is the richest country in Latin America. This feature has been put to the test with the passing of CAFTA. Unless there is a healthy political opposition to free trade, it risks losing not only its economic strength but its democratic character.

Olympia's Marco Rosaire Rossi is a student in the Masters in International Law Program at the United Nations mandate school the University for Peace in San José, Costa Rica.

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▸ **ANNOUNCEMENTS** continued from page 2

Planning meeting for Peace Works 2008

Monday, November 5, 7 PM
Traditions Café, 300 Fifth Ave SW, Olympia

The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace & Justice is beginning now to plan Peace Works 2008. Peace Works '06 was a successful international conference; Peace Works '07 was two theatrical events...what will Peace Works '08 be? Please join us to help develop ideas and a vision for this exciting event scheduled for next spring.

Radical Caring website builder's convergence workshops!

Thursday, November 8, 4:45 PM–6:45 PM
Olympia Freeschool, 610 Columbia St, Olympia

Join us as we radically work to improve Olympia Freeschool's new website with social networking, interactive photo album, video, and online radio capabilities!

Everyone is welcome and Drupal experience is preferred but not required. For more info go to *www.RadicalCaring.org* and click on "Calendar."

Veterans panel on the perils of militarism: from Iraq to Lakefair

Friday, November 9, 7PM
Olympia Community Center, 222 Columbia St NW

In recognition of Armistice Day (Veterans Day) the **Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace** (OMJP) is sponsoring a panel discussion on militarism's expression and effects, in our community and globally. A panel of local veterans, including from the current Iraq War, the Vietnam War, and the 1991 Gulf War will specifically address the attempts to militarize community events such as Lakefair and discuss why such moves and militarism in general are dangerous and should be resisted, and what the alternatives could be.

Protest Tacoma ICE

Friday & Saturday, November 9 & 10, at 11 am
Gather at the designated green zone at S. 17th & Pacific, on the corner and in the grassy park across from the art museum.

Tacoma has the biggest "Homeland Security" Detention Center in the Northwest. They have been tearing apart families, separating children born here from their parents and loved ones that were not. Sixty-four people have died in these detention centers since 2004, and just recently about three hundred people were made ill from the food given in the Tacoma Detention Center. In the designated green zone only 100% LEGAL forms of protest will be taking place! Bring puppets, musical instruments, signs, banners, creativity and passion.

Visit: *lists.riseup.net/www/info/smashtacomaice*

Power up! Put your money where your heart is!

Saturday, November 10, 3–5 PM
Olympia Community Center, Room B
222 Columbia St NW, Olympia

Michelle and Derek Long of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies and Sustainable Connections of Bellingham, and Jon Ramer of the Interra Project in Seattle, will share their ideas about how to launch a successful **Buy Local Campaign** in the South Sound Region. These ideas include coupon books, community rebate cards, and more.

Elements of a Buy Local Campaign consist of buying products from businesses that: share your values, provide employees with meaningful living wage jobs, and offer customers useful non-toxic, free trade, greenhouse gas-reduced, quality products. This workshop will bring together business leaders and residents working within their organizations and communities for this region and beyond. Please come and take part because your choices are making a difference. For more information, contact Karin Kraft at (360) 754-5352.

First Annual Anti-Sweatshop Film Fest

Films will all start at 7 PM on consecutive Monday nights at Traditions Café, 300 5th Ave SW:

Nov. 12: ***China Blue***, (2006, 88 min.)
Nov. 19: ***A Killer Bargain***, (2006, 57 min.)
Nov. 26: ***Made in LA***, (2007, 70 min.)

Sponsored by the **South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign**, a community anti-sweatshop campaign since 2000. The film festival exposes the safety, inhumane conditions, and environmental consequences of sweatshops, and organizing by workers for better conditions. There will be information on what we can do to support efforts to improve conditions, promote sustainability, and obtain products from sweatshop-free sources. The films are free but donations will be accepted to cover costs. For more info, call (360) 705-2819.

Northwest Women of Color and Their Allies Summit

From November 9 to 11
The Korean Women's Community Services Center
123 East 96th St, Tacoma, WA 98445

Hosted by the **Korean Women's Association** with the **National Organization for Women** and a variety of community organizations. As part of the Summit, the **Labor Education & Research Center** at TheEvergreen State College will be hosting a panel, "Women of Color in the Labor Movement," on Saturday, Nov. 10, from 2:30–4 PM. There are also many other excellent panels and speakers on issues ranging from civil/immigrant rights to media activism. For registration and event info, go to *www.now-seattle.org/nwwoca*, e-mail *nwwoca@gmail.com*, or call (206) 448-7348 x 334. Complete workshop descriptions are also posted on the Labor Center website at *www.evergreen.edu/laborcenter.* Follow the link under "Events."

FILM SHOWING: *The Next Industrial Revolution and the Birth of the Sustainable Economy*

Wednesday, Nov. 14, 7 PM
Traditions Café, 300 Fifth Ave SW, Olympia

Video followed by discussion. This free event is cosponsored by the Interfaith Works Earth Stewardship Committee and Earth Care. More information is available at *www.Interfaith-Works.org* or (360) 357-7224.

TWO FILMS: *Corporate Lockdown* and *Granito de Arena*

Friday, November 16, 7 PM
Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation
2200 East End Street NW, Olympia.

Hosted by the **Alliance for Democracy** and the **Olympia Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Committee**. Catch this movie series every first Friday of the month, *www.soundde-mocracy.org*.

Corporate Lockdown is a 22-minute documentary examining the role of prisons in society as a private corporation enters into the management of an Ontario adult correctional facility. "My intention in making *Corporate Lockdown* was to contribute to the current discussion within the mainstream about the privatization of the first adult correctional facility in Canada. Corporate Lockdown takes a deeper look at the real agenda behind the increasingly global prison industrial complex."

Granito de Arena (*Grains of Sand*): For over 20 years, global economic forces have been dismantling public education in Mexico, but always in the constant shadow of popular resistance... *Granito de Arena* is the story of that resistance – the story of hundreds of thousands of public schoolteachers whose grassroots, non-violent movement took Mexico by surprise, and who have endured brutal repression in their 25-year struggle for social and economic justice in Mexico's public schools.

Book signing by Jules Boykoff and Kristian Williams

Friday, November 16, at 7 PM
Orca Books, 509 Fourth Ave East, Olympia

Jules Boykoff is professor of political science at Pacific University and the author of ***Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States***.

Kristian Williams is an activist, a member of Portland Copwatch, and author of ***Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America***.

For more information, call (360) 352-0123.

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Why the United Nations isn't in Burma

by Marco Rosaire Rossi

At the end of World War II, when the horrors of the Nazi holocaust were revealed to the world, the international community collectively cried out: "Never again!" "Never again!" shall a people be systematically persecuted and savagely brutalized. "Never again!" shall there be massive refugees and organized extermination. "Never again!" shall there be secret police and the "disappearance" of dissidents. The only problem with this vow was that it did happen again, and again, and again, and again, and again. The latest examples of the international community's failure to realize this promise are the horrors that have been taking place in Burma in the past few months.

Since August, the democratic movement in Burma has taken to the streets to demand the overthrow of the Tatmadaw junta—also known as the State Peace and Development Council. The initial spark of the non-violent uprising was the government's raising of gas prices 500%—causing a crisis of inflation throughout the country. Though the gas prices were the tipping point, the movement for democracy had been stirring in Burma for almost two decades. In 1990, the people tried to elect Aung San Suu Kyi as the country's first Prime Minister in 30 years, but Tatmadaw wouldn't have it. They invalidated the elections, refused to step down from the government, imprisoned Suu Kyi, and launched a crackdown on all dissidents. The junta's main strategy for control had two parts: crackdown on all democratic leaders and "buy-off" the Buddhists through spending public funds on pagodas and temples. However, after seventeen years, the junta's domination has splintered. The people of Burma have refused to be controlled by either the carrot or the stick.

Of course the uprising has met its opposition. The State Peace and Development Council launched a vicious crackdown: arresting thousands, raiding monasteries, "disappearing" monks, destroying villages. Reports from the Asia press say up to 200 people were killed; reports in the British press place the figure in the thousands. Over 300 villages were destroyed and an estimated 1.5 million people displaced. The tragedy is compounded by the fact that Burma is one of the poorest countries in the region and one of the least developed nations in the world.

Considering the mayhem, it is important to ask: Where is the United Nations? Where's the one international organization whose mission is to "maintain international peace and security" and to encourage "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all?" So far the only action taken by the Security Council is to send a special envoy to try to mediate the conflict. At this point, that may not mean much. Soon after the special envoy's arrival in Burma, diplomats and reporters had declared that the uprising had failed. The junta had won. Liselotte Agerlid, a Swedish diplomat, declared: "The military regime won and a new generation has been violently repressed and violently denied democracy... Now the military has cracked down the revolt, and the result may very well be that the regime will enjoy another 20 years of silence, ruling by fear."

> The reasons for this incompetence by the Security Council are twofold: First is resistance from the east, and second is the reluctance from the west.

The reasons for this incompetence by the Security Council are twofold: First is resistance from the east, and second is the reluctance from the west. For the east, the main players are Russia, India, and China—with China taking the strongest stance. China has used its veto power in the Security Council to block any measure that would jeopardize Tatmadaw. The area is of strategic importance to the Chinese government. The country remains China's only access to the Indian Ocean. Burma has many rich and easily exploitable resources—like oil—and there is vested interest from the state-owned Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation. Burma also acts as an important military buffer to protect China from India. Since 1988, China has been selling a wide variety of arms to the junta. The exact amount is unknown because China has regularly ignored its obligation to report these arms transfers to the United Nations.

India, on the other hand, originally wanted to see Aung San Suu Kyi take power in 1990. It feared the junta; suspecting its harsh practices would bring instability to the region. After the junta managed to secure its place however, India decided to switch sides. Now it supports the junta in the name of stability. Also, India figures that by buddying-up to the junta it could get access to Burma's resources and develop trade routes through the country. Earlier this year, it finalized a $150 million deal with the junta to sell India access to Burma's gas reserves. In addition—and ironically—India has gotten the same idea as China. They support the regime and offer it arms hoping to treat it as a military buffer against China.

> Russia, like China, has also used its veto power to block resolutions against Tatmadaw, and sees business with the junta as lucrative.

Russia, like China, has also used its veto power to block resolutions against Tatmadaw, and sees business with the junta as lucrative. Since 2001, it has been selling weapons to Tatmadaw. In 2006, Russia struck a deal with the junta to give it arms in exchange for access to its oil fields.

For the west, the main players are Britain, France, and the United States. None of these countries actively supports the junta. In September of 2004, the US Senate even went so far as to pass a resolution calling on the Security Council to institute sanctions against the regime. Despite these steps though, none of these countries are willing to go "too far" in their support for the democratic opposition.

Tony Blair once declared that Britain doesn't believe "that trade is appropriate when the regime continues to suppress the basic human rights of its people." If that is true, then he forgot to tell major British companies that still have business in Burma. Aquatic, a British company that provides services to oil and gas companies, is still operating there. The travel firms Asean Explorer and Pettitts still take British tourists around the country—even though Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded with them not to. In fact, a plethora of British companies are still doing business and providing support to the regime including Britannic Garden Furniture, Garvey Furniture, Orient Express, Rolls-Royce, and the Ultimate Travel Company.

France, too, has corporate interest in the area. France worked against a resolution in the European Union calling for sanctions against the Tatmadaw junta. Its main concern is the French oil giant Total. Total is one of the biggest investors in Burma. The company controls 31 % of the natural gas. No doubt, it's putting great pressure on the French government to keep the status quo.

The United States has already instituted sanctions against Burma, but the law provides a clause which allows companies who were already doing business in Burma to stay. In 2005, the US oil giant Chevron bought out Unocal and its business in the southern part of Burma. Chevron is one of the largest investors in the region—with control over 28% of the natural gas. Nyunt Than, president of the Burmese American Democratic Alliance, said that "President Bush should order Chevron to cease operations in Burma immediately...That would cut hundreds of millions of dollars from this military. It would create great pressure on them to come to the table." So far, President Bush has failed to take any such actions.

Even though support from the United Nations is lacking, and western diplomats have proclaimed that the "revolt is over," the people of Burma persist. On October 4th, the State Peace and Development Council agreed to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi if she drops all her demands and calls off the cry for economic and political sanctions. In other words, the junta is willing to negotiate with the opposition if the opposition is willing to no longer oppose them. It is unknown how the movement will respond to these conditions, but one thing is clear: the military government is losing power. The international and domestic pressure is having an affect. The fact that the junta has cracked down so brutally is a demonstration that the non-violent resistance is working; their power is slipping away. The people of Burma, and their supporters, are demonstrating Gandhi's truism in how power responds to the people who challenge it: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." And the people of Burma will win.

Marco Rosaire Rossi is a student in the Masters in International Law Program at the United Nations mandate school the University for Peace in San José, Costa Rica.

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Interview with unembedded reporter Dahr Jamail

Interviewed by Kevin Zeese

"Dahr Jamail's MidEast Dispatches," which can be seen at *www.dahrjamailiraq.com*, is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand what is happening in Iraq. (You can sign up on the site to receive his reports via email.)

Dahr has spent a total of 8 months in occupied Iraq as one of only a few independent US journalists in the country. In the Mideast, Jamail has also reported from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Jamail writes for the Inter Press Service, *Asia Times*, and many other outlets. His reports have also been published in the *Nation*, the *Sunday Herald*, *Islam Online*, the *Guardian*, Foreign Policy in Focus, and the *Independent* to name just a few. Dahr Jamail's current book, *Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq*, can be purchased online or in bookstores.

Compare your experiences in Iraq with how the media generally described the events. Do you think most people, Americans in particular, are getting an accurate picture of what has occurred in Iraq? Is occurring in Iraq?

From the invasion until now, with few exceptions the so-called mainstream media in the West has portrayed a drastically different picture of what Iraq is really like under US military rule. We regularly see stories from the military point of view, and rarely, if ever, how catastrophic the occupation has made life for the average Iraqi. Thus, most people are in no way getting an accurate picture of what has occurred, or what is occurring today.

For example, how many mainstream outlets cite the only scientific survey which has been done to tally the number of Iraqis killed? Known as the *Lancet* report, and conducted by scientists from John's Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health in conjunction with Iraqi doctors from al-Mustanceriya University in Baghdad, it found that 655,000 Iraqis had died as the direct result of the US-led invasion and occupation. Over 90 percent of the people they tracked had death certificates provided by family members to the researchers. Yet the mainstream media does not cite this survey, which was authenticated by British Government. Why not? This is but one example of countless examples.

You were in Fallujah; describe how long, when, and under what circumstances? I understand you were there right after the four Blackwater operatives were killed in Fallujah. I've heard commentators describe the US role in Fallujah in heroic terms, like something out of a World War II movie. How do you see the role of the US military in Fallujah?

I went into Fallujah several times; first, before the siege to see that the military had an ongoing policy of collectively punishing the city's residents by cutting water and electricity every time they were attacked.

Then during April I went as the siege was in progress. After the siege ended, I returned several times in May to chronicle what happened. Later, during the November siege, I covered it by interviewing doctors and refugees from the city.

What the US military did in that city, under orders from the White House, likens it to a modern Guernica. Most of the city was destroyed during the second attack; 70% of it was destroyed. Restricted and illegal weapons like cluster bombs and white phosphorous were used by the military. Marine snipers were shooting anything that moved in the city. Horrible war crimes took place there. Yet, again, the corporate media portrayed it as a heroic action to free the people of the city from fighters, yet it was mostly the people from the city themselves fighting to defend their homes, and their city, from the military.

Of all I saw in Iraq, Fallujah stands as the worst action the US military took, aside from the initial invasion of the country.

Were women, children and the elderly being killed? Was it accidental? Intentional? The US military talks about precision bombs. What kinds of weapons was the US using?

From what I saw in April, at a small clinic inside Fallujah, it was mostly women, children and elderly being shot by marine snipers. Everyone I saw coming to the clinic, people from different parts of the city coming at different times, were all telling the same story. That snipers were shooting everything that moved since they were being kept out of the city by the resistance. It definitely appeared to be intentional, and soldiers later verified this. Later, during the November siege, military leaders declared the entire city a "free fire zone," meaning they gave soldiers license to shoot anything they wanted.

The rhetoric that the US is preventing a worsening of the civil war by staying is erroneous.

As far as "precision" bombings, there is no such thing. Just the blast radius alone for many of the munitions means that by definition there will be damage to nearby locations, which usually means civilian homes. This has been true since the initial invasion.

During the last presidential campaign I was with Ralph Nader when he was being interviewed on an international television show and a woman called from Fallujah; this was after the first battle when Bush pulled back from attacking the city, and the woman expressed pride that they had pushed back the US military.

At the same time I recall Senator Kerry, who was running for president, mocking George Bush for backing down on Fallujah. His comments gave Bush the green light for the second attack on the city where many more died.

Now, I see the top Democratic presidential candidates saying they cannot promise to get out of Iraq by 2013 and all keep a military action against Iran on the table. All this is occurring when the vast majority of Americans want the US out of Iraq and do not want a war with Iran. What do you make of the political situation in the US and the electoral choices that peace voters have?

The silver lining of this dark cloud we are now living under in our country is that the true colors of the mainstream candidates in both the Democratic and Republican parties have the same mindset about US policy in the Middle East.

I urge people to read the National Security Strategy, along with the Quadrennial Defense Review Report. These give a pretty clear picture of US policy in the Middle East-which is essentially to control the natural resources and the shipping lanes. Until those are addressed in open debates with politicians, whatever their party, we cannot expect to see any policy change regarding Iraq, Iran, and the Middle East.

Our political system has been corrupted, and most of the representatives, aside from a handful, are embedded within that system. It is a systemic problem, thus requires solutions which address the system. This means that voting for one candidate or the other isn't going to address the real problem.

What would be the key false impressions that Americans have about Iraq and how would you correct them?

That the occupation has an end date, that if the US leaves things will worsen in Iraq, and that by staying they are preventing the civil war from widening. The occupation, as per the current US strategy supported by all of the mainstream politicians on either side of the isle, has no end date. Period. Drawing down the number of troops, if—when it happens, has nothing to do with moving towards a total withdrawal until the policy is changed.

The bogus idea that if the US leaves things will worsen is both inherently racist and ignorant. Iraq is where western civilization began, and the Iraqi people are more than capable of sorting out the problems within their country. In addition, the majority of those current problems were caused by and continued to be propagated by the foreign occupation forces. When the occupation ends, thus begins the first step towards solving all of the problems within Iraq.

The rhetoric that the US is preventing a worsening of the civil war by staying is also erroneous. Via arming Sunnis and politically supporting Shias, along with facilitating the death squads, the US presence in Iraq only exacerbates the sectarian tensions they helped to foster in the first place. Again, total US withdrawal will be the first step towards reconciliation and peace.

What advice would you give the US peace movement and Americans opposed to the Iraq occupation at this difficult time?

I feel the two single greatest things people can do to help end the occupation are to support Iraq Veterans Against the War, and to continue to organize locally. IVAW is the spearhead, I feel, of any movement that will be effective in ending the occupation, and organizing locally for local, national, and international issues is paramount for building the infrastructure necessary to radically change the collapsing system we find ourselves in today.

I understand you have participated in deep ecology workshops with Joanna Macy, who is a long-term activist and is now involved in what she calls the "Great Turning" from the industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization. Do you see connections between the Iraq occupation and issues like climate change and the ecological crisis?

They are inseparable. The runaway train that is this Late Stage Capitalism, of infinite growth at the cost of human rights and our ecology, brings us the latest symptom, which is Iraq. The US military is one of the largest polluters on the planet—thus the direct link of the ambitions for US global empire, using the military to enforce this, runaway corporatism and all the destruction to the ecology that that growth entails, and thus, our global climate change crisis.

Kevin Zeese is director of Democracy Rising (*www.democracyrising.us*) and Voters for Peace (*www.votersforpeace.us*).

"BEYOND OCCUPATION" WITH...

DAHR JAMAIL

Suheir Hammad

Capitol Theater

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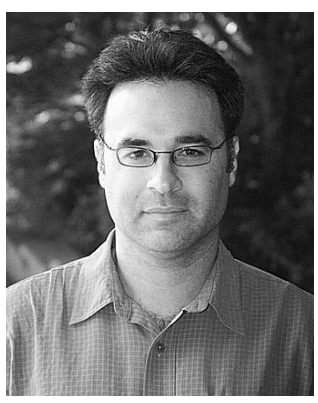
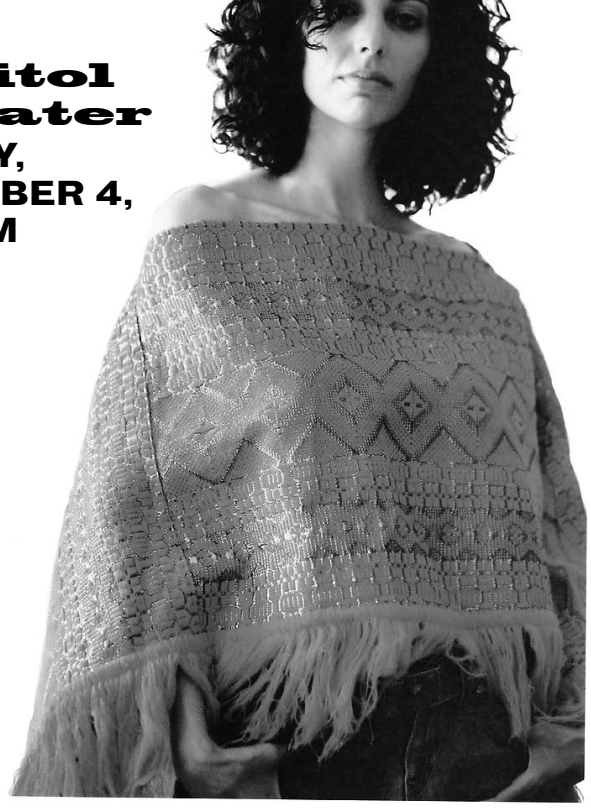


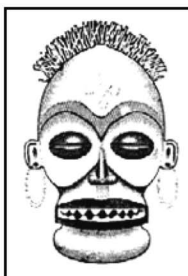


Two masters of the written and spoken word come together, bearing witness to the violences of war and occupation in Iraq and Palestine.

Dahr Jamail will be speaking from his new book, ***Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq***.

Suheir Hammad is a Palestinian spoken word artist, best known for her award-winning performance in ***Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Jam on Broadway*** (2003). She has published three collections: ***Born Palestinian, Born Black***; ***Drops of This Story***; and ***Zaatar Diva***.

$10 general, $7 members & students. Tickets at **buyolympia.com** and **Rainy Day Records**. This event is a benefit for the **Rachel Corrie Foundation** (*www.rachelcorriefoundation.org*) and the kickoff of our **Advocating Activism** documentary series in the Olympia Film Festival.



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